

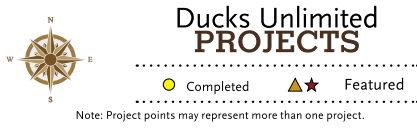
Michigan

2021 CONSERVATION REPORT



★ FERGUSON BAYOU HYDROLOGIC RECONNECTION *Saginaw County*

The 2016 restoration of the 1,000-acre Maankiki Marsh at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge evolved into the opportunity to establish water management resources with long-term benefits by reconnecting to the river system throughout the Shiawassee Flats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited, with funding provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, are planning to connect large portions of former floodplain wetlands via multiple ingress/egress points to the flats with a premium placed on long-term, sustainable wetland management infrastructure. Our newest cooperative effort will enhance nearly 1,000 acres by providing DU construction management services to install multiple water-control structures and excavate two ditches to reconnect the Ferguson Bayou to the Shiawassee River.



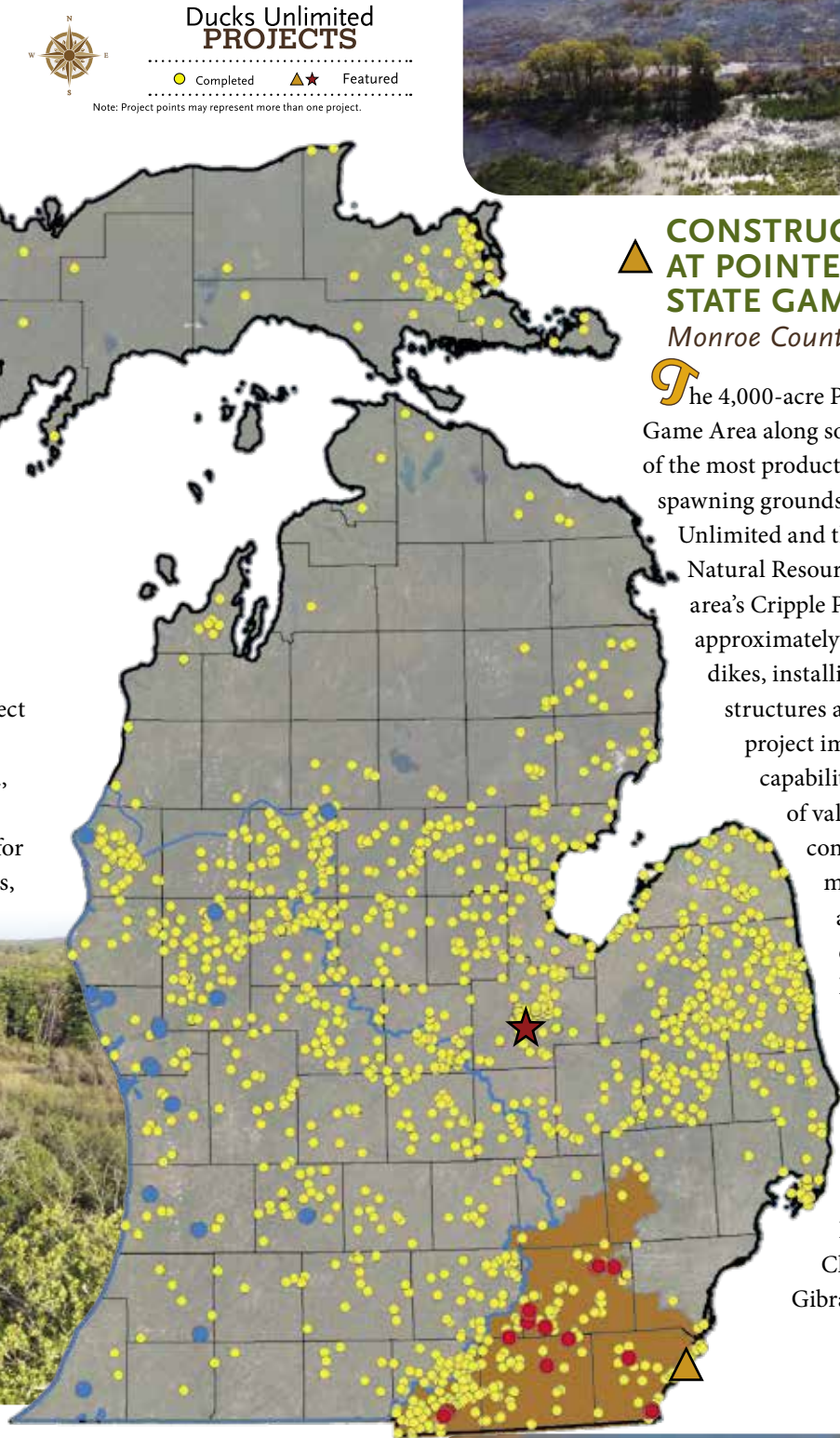
🌊 SOUTHEASTERN LAKE MICHIGAN WATERSHED COASTAL HABITAT INITIATIVE *Western Michigan*

Following decades of North American Wetlands Conservation Act-funded wetlands conservation in Michigan, Ducks Unlimited has received a \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant to restore, enhance and protect 2,500 acres in the Southeastern Lake Michigan Watershed. Six river systems flow into southeastern Lake Michigan; the Grand, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Pere-Marquette, St. Joseph and White. The environments formed by these rivers provide vital habitat for breeding and migrating waterfowl, other migratory bird species, and several of the region's species of special concern.



▲ CONSTRUCTION COMPLETE AT POINTE MOUILLEE STATE GAME AREA *Monroe County*

The 4,000-acre Pointe Mouillee State Game Area along southwest Lake Erie is one of the most productive waterfowl use and fish spawning grounds in the midwest. Ducks Unlimited and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources restored the state game area's Cripple Point Unit by rehabilitating approximately a half-mile of dilapidated dikes, installing two water level-control structures and a pump ramp. This project improved water management capabilities, increased the productivity of valuable coastal hemi-marsh conditions, improved waterfowl migration and nesting habitat and offers better control of invasive plant species. Funding was provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Sustain Our Great Lakes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Coastal Program Great Lakes, the Pointe Mouillee Waterfowlers Festival, Southwest Lake Erie Chapter of Waterfowl USA, Gibraltar Duck Hunters, and DU.



🌸 RESTORING WETLANDS IN THE WESTERN LAKE ERIE BASIN *Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana*

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act Phase III grant builds on two previous grants' successes to address the significant loss of wetlands in the western Lake Erie basin (WLEB) of Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. Before 1850, the WLEB was an expansive wetland complex more than 300,000 acres in size known as the Great Black Swamp. Today, only about 5% remains. Almost all of the WLEB is privately owned and is mostly agriculture. Our partnership addresses the loss of fish and wildlife habitat and poor water quality in Lake Erie by restoring or enhancing 300 acres of wetlands in the WLEB, implemented through private land programs administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife and others.



DU LESSENS IMPACT OF HISTORIC MICHIGAN FLOODING

Historic rainfall across Michigan in May 2020 caused two dams to fail in the middle of the state, creating extreme flooding and forcing more than 10,000 people from their homes in Edenville, Sanford and parts of Midland.

A wetlands conservation partnership between Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helped alleviate some of the impact of that flooding, again underscoring the importance of green infrastructure and wetland habitats.

As the water raced toward Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron, managers at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Saginaw sprang into action.

Ducks Unlimited and several partners in 2016 restored over 1,000 acres of former agriculture land back into wetlands at Shiawassee. The Maankiki Marsh project reconnected nearly two square miles of drained land to the adjacent Shiawassee River for the first time in more than a century. That reconnection proved invaluable over Memorial Day weekend.

“We began monitoring and modeling the rainfall on Wednesday and we knew we were going to be good for the rain event,” said Shiawassee Refuge Biologist Eric Dunton. “But then we got word that the Edenville Dam was breached. It was a huge unknown, we weren’t sure how much water was coming.”

By Thursday, refuge staff knew they had a major event flowing toward them.

“It was a 500-year flood event,” Dunton said. “We made the decision to open Maankiki Marsh. That added more than 1,000 acres of flood storage capacity and every bit of flood storage was needed.”

The refuge opened its gates to incoming floodwater, eventually filling its entire 10,000 acres under 10 feet of water. The ability to safely hold that volume of water lessened the flooding to surrounding landowners.

“We couldn’t manage the resources and do these types of restorations without our partners like Ducks Unlimited,” he said. “For their technical capability for designing structures and managing capacity, it’s priceless to have that level of expertise,” he said.

The Maankiki Marsh project at Shiawassee was funded in part by a \$1.5 million National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Sustain Our Great Lakes grant via the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a federal program designed to target the most significant problems in the Great Lakes ecosystem. Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, Dow Chemical Company and Ducks Unlimited provided additional financial support.



Conservation partners check out the DU project at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.



NEW STATE LEGISLATION LEADS TO BETTER CONSERVATION

A streamlined state approvals process for wetlands restoration will mean more wetland conservation in Michigan. A collaborative effort by Ducks Unlimited, the Erb Family Foundation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) led to new legislation creating an improved regulatory program/permitting process.

The new Voluntary Wetland Restoration (VWR) policy will make it easier for DU and other conservation organizations to obtain a permit for voluntary wetlands restoration projects, saving time and money for future conservation efforts. Additionally, this new program created new state level wetland positions, including a VWR coordinator and a floodplain engineer with Michigan EGLE and a VWR coordinator/wetland habitat biologist with the Michigan DNR.

FLY ACROSS THE GREAT LAKES

The best way to see Ducks Unlimited conservation is from a duck’s point of view. Fly across DU’s Great Lakes Initiative through an interactive map and watch nearly 25 short aerial videos narrated by DU biologists, including many in Michigan. Visit www.ducks.org/FlyDU.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Bakale Unit – Ducks Unlimited and Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division plan to enhance 25 acres of wetland habitat along the Grand River at the Bass River Recreation Area. This project is funded by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

Pointe Sec – Ducks Unlimited and Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division are seeking funds to restore and enhance the third, and final, managed coastal wetland unit near Bad Creek and Cripple Point units at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area.

Saginaw Bay to Lake Erie Coastal Habitat Initiative V – DU will propose a suite of projects within the Michigan Saginaw Bay and Lake Erie watersheds for consideration to North American Wetlands Conservation Act to build on \$4 million of NAWCA funding and \$10 million of partnership contributions within the watershed.



Michigan by the Numbers

2020

- 14 projects completed
- 1,014 acres conserved
- \$682,035 invested

HISTORICAL

- 425 projects completed
- 87,388 acres conserved
- \$46.3 million invested



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Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.DUCKS.ORG/MICHIGAN



GREAT LAKES & ATLANTIC REGION

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